

MARRIAGE

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bhai, the Hindi word for all brothers; in both cases, of course, 'brother' is not used in our narrow sense, but includes paternal cousins of the same generation in any degree. The son of any father related to me as my *pepi* or father's elder brother counts as my *dada* or elder brother, and the son of any father related to me as my *kaka* or father's younger brother counts as my *tamo* or younger brother. *Ahomama*, the word used to designate affine or wife-clans, is a combination of *ako* and *mama*; the Hill Marias call their mother's father *ako*, and a man uses the same term for both his daughter's son and his daughter's daughter, who, of course, would be his affines and not his kindred; a Hill Maria man applies the term *mama* not only in the ordinary Hindi way to his mother's brother (or parallel cousin), but also to his wife's father and to her brother's son. 601

In theory, therefore, marriage is permissible between a man and any woman of any wife-clan, with, however, certain definite exceptions. The chief of these is the strict rule prohibiting a man marrying his wife's elder sister, which is stressed at Bison-horn marriages by the bridegroom putting the ring which he gives her in a cloth which she holds out, and not on her finger, as he does with the ring he gives to his wife's younger sister, and by the elder sister when she receives the ring in her cloth telling the bridegroom that thenceforth he must neither touch her nor utter her name. A man may not marry his mother-in-law or her co-widow or any woman related to them as a 'sister', or any of his aunts' or nieces,¹ even though of an *ahomama* or wife-clan. In theory, there is nothing to prevent him marrying his daughter's daughter, a young widow of his father's father, his father's mother's sister or his mother's father's sister; in practice, however, disparity of age usually rules out such unions, and in all the villages in which I have investigated Hill and Bison-horn Maria marriages I have never come across an actual example of any of them; I found one case, however, in which a man had married his elder brother's daughter's daughter. Lastly, just as a man may not touch or marry his wife's elder sister, so a widow may not marry her dead husband's elder brother, though she can, and frequently does, marry his younger brother. 582 607

Offences against the rules of exogamy occur, but very rarely among the Hill Marias, and only slightly less rarely among the Bison-horn. A youth of the Gume hill clan at Toinar was accused in 1929 of 587 684 835

¹ Using 'aunt' and 'niece' like 'brother' in the extended sense, to cover not only actual aunts and nieces, but also female cousins once removed. 'Sister' similarly includes paternal female cousins of the same generation in any degree.

SUPPLEMENT

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a woman at this time. At the menarche (for which the word used is *kumor utla*, 'the blossoming of the flower'), however, a special hut is built for the girl by women outside the village. A woman of the household brings her food and sleeps with her at night; she must bathe whenever she returns to the house. In some villages, the Marias still make a platform up a tree for the girl, who during the day must hide herself in the forest.

It is very dangerous for anyone to see, let alone to touch, a girl at her menarche. At Tikanpal I was told that if a man saw such a girl as he went through the jungle he should slap her and then go to her parents and after rebuking them, demand a fowl which he should sacrifice; then he should bathe and anoint himself with oil. At Gadapal they said that a man should throw a lump of earth between his legs at the girl, or a stick over his shoulder, and then go home and bathe. Neglect of these precautions might lead to blindness.

At the end of the period—all this refers only to the first period—the girl destroys her hut or platform during the night, throws away her cloth,¹ bathes and returns home before cockcrow. In some villages she is expected to remain for a day or two longer on the veranda of her house: if she has a married elder brother, it is the special duty of his wife to attend to her. Then she puts oil and turmeric on her body—an act which is said to symbolize her formal re-admission into caste, for during the previous days she has been regarded as excommunicated. In many Maria villages, however, the ceremonial use of turmeric is still unknown, and the elder brother's wife carries a pot of water round the house and sprinkles everyone saying, 'Now you are back again in caste'. After this the girl fetches water in an earthen pot and coddungs the floor. In the evening her father invites some of the elders to a bottle of liquor and says, 'My daughter who was unclean all these days is now clean again'. He sacrifices a fowl to the Departed and they feast on its flesh.

There is not nearly so much fuss about the later periods. The woman has to keep out of the way, but there is no danger in looking at her, and when it is over she just has a bath and resumes her ordinary duties. But even so her daily programme is considerably disturbed. She must not sleep inside the house and, of course, sexual intercourse is strictly forbidden. She must not cook or fetch water or go to work in the fields. She must not touch cattle, pigs

¹ There do not seem to be any special taboos associated with this cloth. But the leaf-cups from which the girl eats at this time are charged with magical potency and if a witch can get hold of them she can afflict the girl with palsy.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

582 fullest freedom to joke and even to intrigue; with yet others marriage is almost obligatory.

A boy obviously cannot marry relatives of the inner circle or any of his classificatory 'aunts' or 'nieces'. He is strictly forbidden to marry his wife's elder sister, his mother-in-law, his younger brother's wife or widow and any other woman in a parallel relation to them. There is no objection to his marrying his grandmother or granddaughter even when they are in the direct line of relationship. A few cases are known of men marrying their great-aunts or grand-nieces.

As we shall see presently, the great majority of Muria marriages are of the cross-cousin type and are celebrated between a boy and his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter, or with girls in the same classificatory relationship to him as these.

Throughout India certain relations are regarded as standing in a privileged position to each other. They have licence to laugh and joke with each other, generally in a rather vulgar manner, and in some cases sexual relations between them are not very severely condemned.

605 The Muria have their own system of joking relationships. As a result of the common cross-cousin marriages, a *chelik* has special licence to joke and flirt with his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter (both *mandāri* in Gondi). A *motiari* can be equally free with her father's sister's son or her mother's brother's son (both *manriyo* in Gondi). This freedom, however, only lasts so long as they are not engaged to be married. Should such an arrangement be made the joking relationship changes into one of avoidance, for a girl must never have anything to do with her betrothed.

[183] So long as these cousins are not engaged, however, they have many jokes together. A boy is at liberty to catch hold of the girl's breasts and he may have intercourse with her. If he sees her going to the river to wash her clothes at the end of her catamenial period, he is free to shout to her, 'Are you off to polish it and take off the rust? What are your plans for tonight?' Or again 'How long was the bank of the lake broken?' The girl in turn often teases her boy-cousin by accusing him of having relations with his own sister: 'I saw you with her; you'll have to pay a fine, or if you don't you'll have to marry her'.

604 An uncle stands in a joking relationship to all his nieces except the daughters of his own sister. For example, a man and his uncle's daughter's daughter are in this relationship.

• 607 As elsewhere in India, a woman and her husband's younger brothers or a
603 man and his wife's younger sisters are specially privileged. So are grand-mother and grandson or grandfather and granddaughter. A boy may say to his grandmother, 'Once you are dead I will eat beef in your honour; I will go dancing in front of you with a drum; why don't you die quickly so that I can get a good feast?' And she replies, 'If I die you will have to spend a lot of money, you will have to get rice, you will have to bring several tins of liquor, so what good will it be?' A grandfather always flirts and jokes with his granddaughter. Sometimes he says to her husband, 'How dare you sleep with my wife? You will have to give me the bride-price for her', and so on.

607 The connexion between a man (*dewar*) and his elder brother's wife (*ange*) is the central theme of the Lingo legend. This kinship is more than a mere joking relation; it is often one of deep romance. A Ghotul Pata illustrates the kind of humour that passes between them.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TRIBE

Dewar: O Ange, the gruel is made of broken rice.

Ange: O my Dewar, where are you going today?

Dewar: Today I am not going anywhere

For I have to load my bullocks.

Tomorrow I go to another land to trade.

Ange: I too will go with you to drive the laden bullocks.

Dewar: Don't come with me, for all know how we stand to one another.

Those who do not know us will call us brother and sister.

And when they call us that we shall be ashamed.

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The relations between *samdhi* and *samdhin* are generally of an amiable, coarse and humorous nature. For men this is a drinking rather than a joking relationship, and all their lives whenever they meet they regard it as an excuse for a bottle. The women, specially as they get older, are more obscene in their conversation. They catch hold of each other's breasts, stick feathers into the private parts and exchange the coarsest jokes.

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The place where this joking and fun most commonly occurs is at a marriage. "There is no purdah in a house of marriage." Everybody feels free to fool about; no one is going to be offended; everyone is slightly drunk.

V. SUMMARY

The clan and the family dominate and control Muria social life. Nothing reveals more clearly the extent of this domination than the fact that out of 2000 marriages examined no fewer than 1799 were of the cross-cousin type and, in spite of every temptation to the contrary, 1884 out of 2000 boys married according to their parents' wishes. This could only happen in a society which had a strong regard for its own organization and laws.

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The clan system retains its vitality both as an exogamous unit and as a means of organizing its members round the clan-god and the memory of the Departed. Clan festivals remain great and notable occasions. The clan system, as a study of marriage statistics will show, continues to regulate betrothal and marriage. The *samdhi* relationship, as may be seen in every song and story, continues to be of the first importance. Clan traditions still regulate funerary rites and memorial customs. Totemism is less important, but is still far from moribund. The whole complex of ideas and customs is greatly confused, but the very confusion is perhaps a sign of its vitality.

*674 approached, and that in a fit of rage at his wife's infidelity he had killed her; and then later admitted that he had gone to the cave, but denied that he ever approached Jimme sexually. He said that he had been sitting on the rocks above when his wife threw a stone at him. He slapped her, and she fell accidentally from the rocks and was killed.

[833] There can be little doubt, however, that the prosecution story was true. When the police searched the cave, they found on the dust of the floor the clear signs of a woman lying on her back and a pair of footprints on either side of the marks made by the woman's buttocks. This clearly shows that intercourse practised according to the normal aboriginal technique had been in progress, and Jimme confirmed the fact.

[697] Paklu, when I saw him in jail, was still young, a man of fine physique and good-looking. He has behaved well in jail, for he has been made a Lambardar and wears the tall yellow cap which indicates his office.

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578 Nine cases of suicide were due to disputes between wife and husband. Thus Kome is said to have been quick-tempered, a person who always exaggerated things. She was a young wife, only twenty years old, and when her husband came in one day tired and wet from the fields, and found no food ready, and abused her, she took a rope and slipped out of the house. Her husband, also young, found some stale food and took it back to the field. When he came home in the evening his wife was dead.

●[607] Mate had a row with her husband over lighting the fire. He was drunk and beat her, and she attacked him. But her husband's elder brother, to whom she was strictly taboo and who had no business to touch her, intervened and beat her also. During the night, she left the house and tried to get across the Indrawati River in order to reach her mother's house. But there was no ferry and she hanged herself with her clothes. It is worthy of note that although there was a deep river at hand, the girl preferred to end her life by hanging.

An unusually tragic incident occurred at Metapal in February 1937. Kuhrami Hurra returned one day from the bazaar and found that one of his calves had been killed by a panther. Rightly or wrongly he considered that this was

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with him saying that he did not give her proper clothing⁵⁷⁸ or ornaments and that he did not sleep with her often⁵⁹⁵ enough. Jealous and frustrated, she hanged herself in a fit⁷⁶² of despair. Poyami Gupe of Bastanar, a girl of about eighteen years, was widowed at sixteen and remarried two years later as the junior wife of Guddi. One day, about seven months after the new-marriage, Gupe went to collect young bamboo shoots—a great delicacy to the aboriginal—and came home rather late in the evening. For this she was scolded by her co-wife and no doubt accused of every crime that jealousy could suggest. She left the house and went to stay with her maternal uncle. Guddi went to bring her back, but rather than go with him she hanged herself.

Kawasi Dulga's reaction was unusual. He appears to have been one of those husbands who should never have tried such an experiment; a man of weak character who could not keep his two wives in order. The women were always quarrelling and made his home and life a misery. One day he went with the younger to the bazaar and, as they were coming home, they quarrelled and Dulga slapped her. Presently he told her to go ahead as he wanted to relieve himself. She walked on a little way, but he did not appear and when she went back to look for him she found him hanging from a tree.

IV

The relationship between the wives of brothers is carefully⁶⁰⁷ regulated. Between an elder brother and his younger brother's wife there is an absolute taboo: there is no stronger rule of avoidance in all primitive society. But the younger brother stands in a special and privileged relationship to his elder brother's wife: he can flirt with her; he can make indecent jokes; he can become her lover; after her husband's death he has the first claim on her person and if she marries anyone else he has a right to compensation.¹

It is obvious that among a people where brothers often live together, sharing house and lands, where jealousy is strong and sexual desire passionate and keen, such a tradition may

¹ For a detailed study, see Shamrao Hivale, 'The Dewar-Bhauji Relationship', *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII (1943), pp. 157-67.

- 607 sometimes lead to trouble. To the younger man, his elder brother's wife is delightful because she is accessible and does not burden his conscience. To the elder man, the younger girl is doubly attractive because she is forbidden. The word [601] 'brother', of course, under the classificatory system of relationship, includes also male relations who are more usually called cousins.

x 674 A youth Hemla Bakka killed his wife Jimme for having 578 betrayed him with his elder cousin Hemla Dhurwa. During 607 the season when the mangoes ripen, Jimme had gone with Dhurwa to collect and eat the fruit, and the husband suspecting them followed and watched them secretly. Dhurwa climbed the tree and shook it; the woman collected the fallen mangoes, and they ate them together. Then Dhurwa took her behind some bushes and was about to have intercourse with her, when Bakka appeared and separated them. Some time later Bakka returned suddenly from his field to drink water and discovered Dhurwa coming out of his house. He said that he would report the matter to the village elders. When he scolded his wife for her behaviour, she retorted that she would live with the man she loved and that nothing could prevent her. There was then a regular family quarrel, in which Bakka's father was beaten, and this so enraged the boy that he struck his wife a heavy blow on the head and killed her. There can be no doubt that in this case Bakka's feelings were outraged not only because his wife was unfaithful, but because she was unfaithful with a forbidden person, an act which might bring all manner of supernatural vengeance upon him—cattle might die and he himself might be afflicted with a psycho-dropsical swelling.

Another case of the same kind is that of Marvi Boti of Telam. Boti and his younger brother Kosa were living with their father, and were both married. Boti's wife died and he fell in love with his younger brother's wife, though the villagers said that it was really the girl who made overtures to Boti and threatened to commit suicide if he did not marry her. Kosa suspected his wife and beat her, and this seems to have decided Boti, for a week later he ran away with the girl to the Jeypore Zamindari. After about three weeks Boti

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decided to go to his father's house to get his children by ^{674x}
his former wife. The girl insisted on going with him. As ⁵⁷⁸

they were approaching Telam they had ⁶⁰⁷

the misfortune to meet Kosa coming along the same path. Apparently some people returning from a bazaar had told him that Boti had returned, and he had set out to seek vengeance armed with a *gagra*. When the boy saw his elder brother, he said, 'My fate is good, for it has sent you to me, since you have run away with my wife'. And so saying he struck Boti across the face. At that Boti seized his brother by his arms, and there was a struggle in the course of which Kosa was killed.



Gagra knife
(Length 18")

When Boti returned from jail, he had to make special offerings in addition to ^[42] undergoing the usual ceremony of purification. Since he had kept his younger brother's wife, he had to sacrifice to the Departed of his house, and to his clan-god. If he had not done this, his body would have swollen and he would have died. As it was, he was impotent for a whole year after he was released from jail.

V

It is perhaps surprising that there are not more murders ^{674x}
as a result of the liberties allowed a youth with his elder ⁶⁰⁷
brother's wife. Boti stood in this pleasant relation to Mase and as a result they poisoned Mase's husband in order that they could be regularly married. The murder of Tati Hirne was due to her rejection of her dead husband's younger brother when he came to claim her.

It is possible that the remarkable forbearance shown by Uji Poda towards Kopa, his younger cousin-brother, who was in love with his wife, Ragho, was due to his realization that Kopa was not breaking any tribal or social conventions:

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674 he was only outraging his personal marital feelings. Kopa
607 was working as Poda's Kabari or farm-servant at Kaurgaon
on the banks of the Indrawati River. Five years before
the murder Poda discovered that the boy was enjoying a love
affair with his wife, taking advantage of the privileged
relationship in which he stood to her. A ceremony of
purification and appeasement was performed and Kopa left
Ragho alone for a time. But they were evidently really in
love with one another, and soon their intimacy began again.
In July 1933, Poda discovered this and turned Kopa out of
his house and service. Kopa went to live with another
cousin in the same village.

On the night of Sunday 30 July, Kopa crept into Poda's
house in the middle of the night in order to lie with Ragho.
But while they were together, her hand accidentally knocked
against her husband who was sleeping by her side and woke
him. Kopa ran for his life, but not before he had been
recognized.

The following day news came that a member of the family
in another village, Chota Karka, had died, and Poda with
Ragho, Kopa and other relatives went to the place for the
funeral ceremonies. On the Wednesday there was an open
quarrel there between the two men, and Poda told the elders
of the village of Kopa's behaviour and beat him publicly.
Kopa ran away and hid in the forest. Then on the Thursday
everyone went home.

That afternoon three of Poda's servants were working in
his field, weeding the kora crop. In the field there was
[343] the usual field-hut in which the cultivators rest and guard
the crops. It was raining that day, and at about 4-30 in
[293] the afternoon Kopa arrived there carrying a bamboo umbrella
and sat down by the fire in the field-hut to dry himself. A
little later Poda came and when he saw who was sitting there
he fell into a great rage. He beat Kopa several times with his
bare fists, knocked him on his back, sat on his chest and
throttled him with both hands. The three servants did not
dare to interfere, but stood watching.

Then Poda had the body taken to another hut in someone
else's field, tied a rope round the neck of the corpse, and
strung it up to the roof to give the impression that the dead
man had committed suicide. He bribed the witnesses and

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told everyone who knew anything about the matter to make^{674x}
a report of suicide, and since he was a man of great⁶⁰⁷
influence this was done.

The remarkable thing about this case is not the violence with which the murder was committed, but the very great forbearance shown by Poda. After forgiving Kopa the first time, he himself went to the expense of marrying him to a young girl, perhaps with the idea that this would divert his attention. Even on the second occasion he refrained from physical violence, and contented himself with turning the boy out of his house. Few Maria would have failed to kill Kopa immediately after discovering him in the house at night. But all Poda did was to put the matter before the village elders. It seems to have been Kopa's impertinence in going to the hut and sitting there as if nothing had happened that suddenly deprived Poda of his self-control. The Court, taking these matters into consideration, sentenced him to only five years' imprisonment.

VI

THE MOTHER'S HOUSE

Another very common source of domestic friction is the⁵⁷⁴
custom that allows a girl to visit her mother's house. These⁵⁹³
visits are an exciting and important part in the life of every aboriginal girl. During her marriage ceremony many of the songs deal with the happiness of her childhood home, and the misery of a life with a husband under the domination of her parents-in-law. After marriage the mother's house acquires a sweet and romantic memory. Its hardships and quarrels are easily forgotten, and the love of one's own parents appears tender and kind compared to the constant friction of the new home. It is generally considered correct for girls to go to their parents' house for important domestic events such as the ceremonies for the birth of children, marriages and funerals, for some of the chief festivals and to help in the more urgent work of the fields. Husbands, especially young husbands, resent this, for it means one pair of hands the less to work in their own house. Girls are not always very tactful in the enthusiasm they show at returning